

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN STEPHEN F. LYNCH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE
AND POSTAL SERVICE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HEARING ON

**The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
(WMATA)**

Wednesday, April 29, 2009

Ladies and gentleman, again , let me welcome you to the Subcommittee's first D.C. related oversight hearing of the 111th Congress. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of today's hearing is to explore and examine a host of issues currently confronting the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (w.m.a.t.a.) in its effort to efficiently operate its Metrorail, Metrobus and MetroAccess transit services. It's been a little over four years, since a hearing has been held on W.M.A.T.A. and while much has improved for what is known as "America's Transit System," a few systemic challenges continue to remain. although today's hearing won't bring a final resolution to many of the transit authority's core questions or pressing concerns, the hearing is intended to continue and in some respect renew the dialogue between W.M.A.T.A., its regional partners and the federal government.

As the primary provider of mass transit throughout the national capital area, W.M.A.T.A.'s operations are intricately intertwined and linked to the continual functionality of the federal government. As many of you are aware, Metrorail and Metrobus are responsible for the transportation of nearly 70 percent of the area's federal workforce to-and-from work on a daily basis. The transit system plays a critical role in the area's emergency preparedness efforts and is often heavily relied upon by the federal government for publicly supported events such as Presidential Inaugurations or other national mall celebrations. In fact, the mere creation of W.M.A.T.A. by way of the 1967 interstate compact was, in many ways, based upon the rationale that the large presence of the federal government and the attraction of

the Nation's capital as a premiere tourist destination necessitated the need for the development of a reliable public transit system for the National Capital Region.

Fast forwarding to today, W.M.A.T.A. has blossomed into a robust and leading transit agency, in charge of operating the second largest rail transit system and the fifth largest bus network in the country. Covering a 1,500 square-mile area, W.M.A.T.A. now operates a fleet of some 1,500 buses, serving over 330 routes and provides Metrorail services to 86 stations, on five rail lines and 106 miles of track, much of which has been constructed using federal dollars. While these facts and the region's continual reliability on Metrorail, bus and its paratransit service, point to the success of the 30 plus year old transit system, W.M.A.T.A. continues to face serious financial, operational and now, post September 11, security challenges.

To that end, it is my hope that today's hearing will provide the Subcommittee with the most current developments in W.M.A.T.A.'s operations, finances, safety initiatives and infrastructure improvement efforts. Whether it's a frank conversation on the remaining facets of the W.M.A.T.A. dedicated funding effort or on management's proposed Metrobus service cuts and route adjustments, today's oversight proceedings are purely meant to provide us, as national capital area stakeholders, the opportunity to discuss and explore common solutions to a common asset – The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

I'd like to thank those who have agreed to testify on today and I look forward to a productive but not necessarily lengthy hearing, as the Subcommittee has been made aware of your various afternoon commitments. Again, I thank you and now yield to the Ranking Member, Congressman Chaffetz from Utah for any opening remarks.